

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for the removal of the hydrogen sulfide contained in natural gas, including:

- a) absorbing the hydrogen sulfide present in natural gas by means of a virgin naphtha, essentially consisting of C₅-C₈ paraffins, in an ~~adsorbing~~ absorbing device and with a molar ratio virgin naphtha/H₂S of between 0.85 and 1.5;
- b) recovering the hydrogen sulfide absorbed by the virgin naphtha as head product of a distillation column operating with a reflux having a temperature ranging from -5 to -20°C;
- c) recycling the virgin naphtha discharged as bottom product of the distillation column, to the absorption step (a);
- d) introducing the hydrogen sulfide back to the production field of natural gas, at the temperature and pressure conditions present at the head of the distillation column.

Claim 2 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the natural gas is pre-treated to eliminate carbon dioxide.

Claim 3 (Original): The process according to claims 1 or 2, wherein the absorption step is effected in a filling column.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The process according ~~any of the previous claims to~~ claims 1 or 2 wherein the absorption step is effected at room temperature.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The process according ~~any of the previous claims~~ to claims 1 or 2 wherein the distillation column operates at a head temperature of between -9 and -15°C.

DISCUSSION OF THE AMENDMENTS

Claims 2 and 3 are original.

Claims 1, 4 and 5 are currently amended.

The claims have been amended to remove improper multiple dependencies and to correct minor typographical errors.

No new matter has been added by the amendments.

Upon entry of the amendments Claims 1-5 will be active.